

DROS Y BRYN OVER THE HILL

Modern and historic stories about life in Llangynog,
Carmarthenshire

E9 – TRIBUTE IS DUE

The lost chapels of Bethesda and Capel Cywyn



by
Bruce Wallace

February 2022

01267 211207

07817 583720

brucewallace.cowin@gmail.com

Additional information and corrections welcome

Foreword

Mae llawer lle a llawer person yn haeddu cael eu cofio.
Os na chofnodir hwnt mewn pryd, ant oll I gyd yn ango.

Many a place and many a person deserve to be remembered.
If they are not recorded, they will, in time, be forgotten.

I am grateful to Eiluned Rees, Llansteffan for allowing use of information from her extended essay '*The Independents in Llanybri and Llanstephan*' published in the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian in 2008. I am also grateful to the late Rev. J Hopkin Evans who undertook much research, and on which the paper by Eiluned is based. Finally, I am grateful to Dyfed Family History Society who undertook a memorial survey at Bethesda in the 1980s and have allowed me to access their research.

This is one in a series of modern and historical stories about life in Llangynog and beyond. Corrections and additions are always welcome as my research continues.

Bruce Wallace

01267 211207

07817 583720

brucewallace.cowin@gmail.com

Contents of "Tribute is due"

1) A SPIRITUAL HOME - Chapel life

2) REDUCED TO RUIN – Bethesda Independent Chapel

- a) Incumbents
- b) When I do now at anchor lie (1773 – 1905)
- c) Annual treat (1905 – 1943)

3) PUT TO SECULAR USE – Capel Cywyn.

- a) Incumbents
- b) Daughter chapel (1865 – 1902)
- c) Frock coat and silk hat (1902 – 1957)

4) UNSUNG HEROES – A few summary remarks

Appendix I

BURIALS AT BETHESDA – by year of death

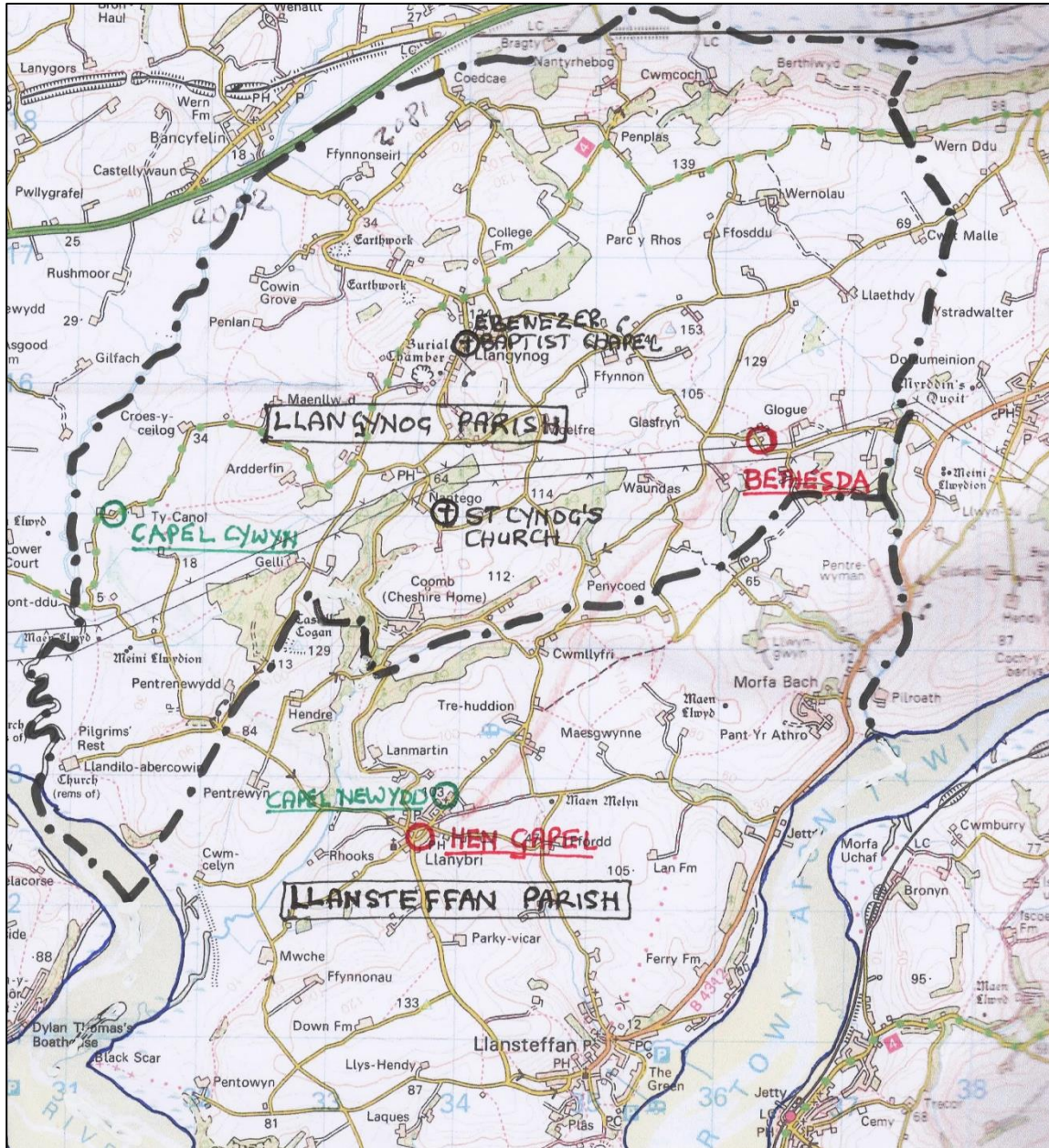
Appendix II

MEMORIAL TRANSCRIPTIONS – in alphabetical order of surname

1) A SPIRITUAL HOME

Chapel life

The parish of Llangynog has been blessed with sites of religious worship for Millenia. St Cynog's Church is located on a site that probably has Celtic origins. The now closed St Teilo's Church, down on the coast is pre-Norman.



A map showing the location of religious establishments in the two parishes

In Wales, the Established Church grew in strength following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Soon after, three people from Llangynog parish, along with thirty others from Llansteffan parish were taken before the Archdeacon's Court for refusing to attend church. However, following the Toleration Act 1688, Nonconformists could follow their desires and worship in freedom. In 1700, the derelict Hen Gapel (Old chapel) in Llanybri was taken over, restored, and became Independent.

The Baptists were the first Nonconformists to establish a meeting house in Llangynog parish. They met at Ty-coch, later superseded by Ebenezer in 1811. The Independents followed, establishing Bethesda Chapel in 1773 and Capel Cywyn in 1869. Both chapels were daughter-houses to chapels in the adjacent parish, Bethesda from Capel Newydd and Capel Cywyn from Hen Gapel. Bethesda had a graveyard and an attached smallholding for the maintenance of the minister at Hen Gapel.

Life in this group of chapels is described by Eiluned Rees in 2008 paper (referred to in the introduction). It is worth quoting:-

“For many people, the demise of a chapel means nothing. Others actually applaud their closure, accusing them of being nothing more than citadels of hypocrisy and cant. There are some who may lament their disappearance on aesthetic grounds. But for those of us who were brought up in chapel, the sight of what was once a spiritual home **reduced to ruin** or **put to secular use** is grievous.

“The chapel was more than a venue for Sunday services and Sunday School. It was a way of life, enriching the lives of countless generations and, moreover, contributed to the preservation of the Welsh language. Children at a very early age were dressed in their Sunday best and made to sit quietly in the family pew. As soon as they could memorise a few words, they were invited with their peers to stand in the ‘Sêl Fawr’ and recite a verse from the Bible, the verses getting longer as the reciters grew in size or confidence.

“In Sunday School they were taught stories from the Bible, they sang hymns, and they were instilled with the principles of Christian living. As teenagers they were received as members of the chapel in a simple ceremony. As adults they would move to a higher class in Sunday School, where the finer points of theology might be discussed.

“The ‘Cwrdd Gweddi,’ held regularly on a weeknight and periodically on Sundays in the absence of a preacher, was primarily an adult affair. Sometimes, a session would be enlivened by the person praying getting carried away with ‘hwyl.’ ‘Hwyl’ on a grander scale was likely to be experienced in sermons delivered by a Big Name, someone like Jubilee Young, at the annual ‘Cyrddau Mawr’ or ‘Cyrddau Diolchgarwch.’

“Members of the congregation in effect belonged to a large family, with the minister as a father figure. They gave one another spiritual and practical help when needed, and one way in which this was exemplified was in the mass attendance at funerals.

“Funerals were usually attended by all available clergy, partly because families were divided in their religious alliances, and because clerics did work together. They would all participate in the service in the house, in the place of worship and at the graveside. Church services were not confined by a rigid form and there were no restrictions on the length of preachers’ contributions. A funeral feast, prepared in the chapel Vestry, rounded off proceedings.

“Associated with the chapel were pleasures such as tea-parties and Sunday School trips. Up until the first World War, tea-parties were held on Christmas Day. They were subsequently moved to Boxing Day or later in the week. Prizes were awarded for Sunday School attendance.

“Most ministers played an important role in secular affairs, being involved in the Parish Council and other organisations and with concerts and eisteddfodau. Ministers performed the role of social workers in their pastoral care for their flock, with the added advantage of knowing every person’s

personality and circumstances and being fully cognisant of the family background. Their absence from the community has been detrimental to society.”

Much of what Eiluned said is supported by documents and reports quoted in the following research.

2) REDUCED TO RUIN

The history of Bethesda Independent chapel

a) Incumbents (shared with other chapels)

1) Thomas Davies	- 1773 to 1782	(9 years)
2) Jonathan Lewis	- 1782 to 1784	(2 years)
3) David Davies	- 1786 to 1828	(42 years)
4) Daniel Evans	- 1828 to 1837	(9 years)
5) Josiah Thomas Jones	- 1838 to 1849	(11 years)
6) John Thomas Jones	- 1849	(1 year)
7) David Phillips	- 1849 to 1856	(1 Sunday a month, based in Cana)
8) Daniel Jones	- 1861	(1 year)
9) William C Jenkins	- 1864 to 1867	(3 years)
10) David Davies	- 1869 to 1871	(2 years)
11) Abednego Jenkins	- 1873 to 1876	(3 years)
12) David Trevor Davies	- 1877 to 1884	(7 years)
13) Henry Evans	- 1886 to 1896	(10 years)
14) John Robert Salmon	- 1897 to 1904	(7 years)
15) Thomas Davies	- 1905	(1 year)
16) David Thomas Griffiths	- 1905 to 1914	(9 years)
17) W H Cassam	- 1916 to 1919	(3 years)
18) Robert Charles	- 1922 to 1943	(21 years)

b) When I do now at anchor lie – 1773 to 1905



The entrance to Bethesda, in 2021 just an overgrown gap in an old roadside wall

In 1773, Hen Gapel in Llanybri was restored as a Nonconformist chapel. The minister at the time, Thomas Davies was then attracting a congregation of 360, included many from the adjacent parishes of Llangynog and Llangain.

A plot of land near Glogue, on the back road from Llanybri to Carmarthen was therefore acquired from Jenkin Morris of Pantyrathro, and a chapel erected there in the same year. A house was also erected beside the chapel. It was an ideal location, being in eastern part of the parish of Llangynog on the road to Llangain as would be accessible to residents of both parishes. The land immediately around the chapel was large enough for a graveyard* and additional land was used as a smallholding for the maintenance of the minister. At the time, it was described as '*hen gapel a darn croes iddo*' (an old chapel in the shape of a cross). The building was rectangular, with a side wall façade and two doors. The pulpit was placed between the two doors. *Details of the memorials in the graveyard appear in the Appendix.

Thomas Davies then had two chapels to serve which he did until he died in 1782. He was buried in Bethesda where his memorial reads:- '*Here lie the remains of the Rev. Tomos Davies, late minister of this church who departed this life September 17, 1782, aged 72. Also of Jonnah Davies, his son who departed this life August 14th, 1790, aged 41 years. Also Margaret, wife of the said Jonnah Davies who departed this life November 13th aged 77 years*'.



Part of the 1840 tithe map showing the location of Bethesda Chapel, then on a dead-end road. The cartography is not very accurate so the shape of the chapel cannot be guaranteed.

A nearby grave first erected two years earlier, in 1780, records the sad circumstances of one family, where four children are buried. It reads:- '*Here lie the remains of the children of Jonnah Thomas of*

this parish. John Thomas died 11th March 1780 aged 1 year, Mary Thomas died 12th May 1783 aged 12 years, Jonna Thomas died ... September 1783 aged 1 year, Elizabeth Thomas died 4th October 1788 aged 2 years. In memory of Simon Thomas, Bristol and buried in Brunswick Bristol 11th February 1789 aged 2 years. Simon Thomas must have been another child or a close relative.

Jonathan Lewis succeeded as the second incumbent but was there for only two years. In 1786, David Davies, born in Llansawel, began a long tenure at Hen Gapel and Bethesda. He was a learned man who had studied in Carmarthen College and was a teacher before coming to Bethesda.

In 1789, his first wife died in childbirth. He remarried and had four sons and two daughters. In 1795, he was appointed Joint Principal of Carmarthen College. In 1808, Hen Gapel and Capel Bethesda hosted a regional assembly of the Independents. Services were held in both chapels and one of the preachers was the eminent Thomas Phillips, Neuaddlwyd.

In 1813, David Davies was accused of fathering an illegitimate child, though his defenders maintained that the accusation arose from malice. He lost much of his congregation but continued until an accident caused his death in 1828. He had fallen off his horse in Carmarthen. He was buried next to his first wife in Bethesda graveyard, where his second wife and two of his children are also buried.

The 4th minister, Daniel Evans arrived in 1828 and stayed for nine years. In 1838, Josiah Thomas Jones became the fifth minister to come to Hen Gapel and Bethesda. He did not put his full energies into the two chapels because of a passion for Welsh literature. He applied this other interest by running a printing press in Carmarthen and publishing papers and books on Welsh subjects for which he was highly acclaimed. While Josiah was there, a memorial in the graveyard included a heart rendering yet uplifting poem to a young man who died after a long illness. It reads:-

*Sacred to the memory of William, son of James and Margaret Jones, Llanybri who died July 14th,
1840, aged 30 years.*

*Long nights and days I bore the pain, to wait for cure. Twas all in vain.
But God at last he thought it best, to ease my pain and give me rest.*



Three young souls - left, the grave of Margaret Davies (1813-1850), centre, Anna Jones (1817-1840), and right, William Jones (1810-1840), referred to above with the poem.

Although Josiah Thomas Jones was the named minister from 1838 until 1849, the 1841 Llangynog tithe map records enclosure 53, in which the chapel appears (see above), as being *owned by Bethesda Presbyterian Congregation and occupied by William Thomas*. The 1841 census also named William Thomas as a 55-year-old farmer occupying *Llainau Alias Bethesda*.

In the spring of 1849, Josiah's young nephew, 26-year-old John Thomas Jones became the sixth minister at Bethesda, covering for Josiah's absence at the printing press. However, six months later John Thomas Jones died while on a preaching tour of North Wales. No returns were sent to the *Cymanfa De-Orllewin* in 1850 or 1851.

The Religious Census of 1851 recorded that Capel Bethesda had 52 attending morning Sunday School and 27 scholars attending in the afternoon. As there was no permanent minister there for 14 years, David Phillips from Cana, Bancyfelin took Services one Sunday a month from 1849 and 1856 and Daniel Jones came in 1861.

During this time, John Loveluck (b.1804), a gamekeeper on the Margam estate near Port Talbot moved with his wife Mary and their young family to nearby 110-acre farm called Ffald, Llangynog. They were regular attendees at Bethesda with their three of their sons, Edward, John and David. In 1889, John Loveluck died and was buried in St Cynog's Church. However, his three sons, Edward, John and David were buried at their home chapel, Bethesda. On their memorial stone, the family name is spelt *Lovelucke*

In 1864, the 9th minister (and the first permanent one for some time) was William C. Jenkins. He had recently qualified from Carmarthen College. He had a talent for teaching and singing and began to rebuild numbers at Bethesda, going from just 6 to 18. In 1866, the interior of Bethesda was renovated to a design of Rev. G Jones of Laugharne. It cost £93 (£12,000 today) but was paid for on the day it reopened. Perhaps this was because William had been appointed Secretary of a big Eisteddfod in Llansteffan that year. He must have used the opportunity to promote a fund raiser for Bethesda. Unfortunately, William only stayed for 3 years, leaving in 1867.

Three relatively short-lived ministers then came to Bethesda. Bachelor David Davies came in 1869 and stayed with Mr and Mrs Lewis at Pendeggy Mill, but he left for America in 1871. In 1873, Abednego Jenkins (b.1818, Maenclochog, Pembrokeshire) came from Merthyr Farm and Gibeon Chapel with his wife Anne and two children. After three years, he moved to Trinity St Clears where he is buried. The 12th minister, David Trevor Davies came in 1877. The year he arrived, a sea captain was buried at Bethesda and his memorial included a nautical poem. Part of it reads:-

In memory of Captain James Jones of Llanybri died February 28th, 1877, aged 70.

*When I do now at anchor lie, with others of my fleet.
I hope once more for to set sail, Savour Christ to meet.*

In 1883, the adjacent Bethesda Cottage was rebuilt. In 1886, the 13th minister was Henry Evans. He would bring some stability with a tenure of 10 years. A report in the Carmarthen Journal in 1893 showed that just like most chapels, Bethesda was a centre of cultural enjoyment and education. It said:-

“LLANGUNNOCK – On Tuesday 2nd inst., a lecture was delivered at Bethesda Chapel by the Rev. E B Lloyd of Bwlchnewydd, the subject being Hunan ddiwylliant (self-culture). The Rev. D Thomas, Llanybri acted as chairman. The chapel was crammed, and we are glad to state that everyone

present seemed highly pleased with the lecture, as it was exceedingly instructive for both young and old.”

By the time Henry Evans left in 1896, attendance had risen to 12 members, with 28 in Sunday School. John Robert Salmon, a former blacksmith, took over as the 14th minister in 1897, staying until 1902.

c) Annual treat - 1905 to 1943

In 1905, Thomas Davies came as incumbent but only stayed a short while. Later in the year, David Thomas Griffiths came as the 16th minister. He stayed for 9 years. In January 1907, the Welshman printed a short item which referred to a youngster returning home from Bethesda Sunday School:-

“LLANGUNNOCK. Early Primrose.- On Sunday D R Davies, the youngest son of Mr E Davies, Penparke, Llangunnock, was coming home from Bethesda Chapel, and on the way picked a primrose in full bloom. The little boy was very glad to bring the flower home to show to his mother”

This was a period when there was time for youngsters to enjoy the simple things in life, and the prevailing form of communication at the time wanted to report such simple events. How times have changed.

A report from 1908 confirms the community support offered by the chapel, especially in times of tragedy, and the fact that several denominations will work together when required. A young woman had died at nearby Waundass Farm and was buried at Ebenezer Chapel, but those at Bethesda were there in support. It said:-

“LLANGUNNOCK. Death of Miss Harries. – With deep regret we record the death of Miss Sarah Harries, daughter of Mr and Mrs Harries, Waundass Farm. On Tuesday the 23rd ult., she fell asleep at the early age of 21. A very large circle of friends and relatives assembled together to pay the last tribute of respect to the departed. The large cortege left the house for Ebenezer Baptist Chapel burial ground. The Rev. E Hughes, Ebenezer, read the appropriate portion of the Holy Writ, and the Rev. David Thomas, pastor of Bethesda Congregational Chapel spoke of the departed who, though young, had for many years been a most faithful member at Bethesda. ... Amongst others present were the Rev. E Jones, vicar of Llangain and Mr D Loveluck and Mr John Walters, deacons of Bethesda. ... A large number of floral tributes were sent, including a globe wreath from members of Bethesda Chapel.”



The grave of Elizabeth Hughes (1848-1909) and William Hughes (1847-1923). They lived at Mount Pleasant, near Moelfre Woods. The sentiment to William reads 'Chwalu cartref, rhanu teulu. Dyna sydd yn bod o hyd. Nid oes yma deulu cyfan. Byth l'w gael o fewn y byd,' reference to being dearly missed in the family home.

A 1913 report in the Carmarthen Journal mentions the Rev. David Thomas Griffiths, Bethesda, and again confirms earlier references about tea parties and cultural life involving the local chapels working together. It also shows that the owners of Coomb Mansion, although faithful to the established church at St Cynog's, were supportive of the Independent chapels. It said:-

"LLANGUNNOCK. Annual treat.- The annual tea party in connection with the Band of Hope and Sunday School took place at Ebenezer Baptist Chapel. The tables were nicely laid by the ladies. After justice had been done to the dainties, all adjourned to the chapel where entertainment was given by the members, including recitations, duets, quartets, and a party of twelve conducted by Mr Joseph Thomas, Brynawel. ... Prizes in books were given to all the children for attendance and good conduct during the winter months. Mr William John, Lambstone, proposed a vote of thanks and said he was proud that Lady Owen Phillips and Mrs Morris, Coomb had supported the Band of Hope. The Rev. David Thomas Griffiths, Bethesda seconded."

An August 1915 report said:-

"The Sunday Schools of Bethesda, Llangunnock; Peniel, Carmarthen; and Capel Newydd, Llanybri had their annual outing to the seaside. The cockle gathering during these visits was a great success."

David Thomas Griffiths left in 1916, to be replaced by the 17th minister, William Henry Cassam to take over the Hen Gapel group of chapels. He came to live in Llansteffan. Although World War I was a long way from Llangynog, it was brought home to the congregation in April 1917 when the Rev. Dyffnallt Owen of Heol Awst Independent Chapel in Carmarthen came back from time at the front. He gave a lecture in Bethesda Chapel on 'Gyda Bechgyn Cymru yn Ffossydd Ffrainc' (With the Welsh boys to the French trenches).

The 18th and last minister at Bethesda was Robert Charles. He started in 1922 and stayed for 21 years. He did not move to the area but continued to live in Fforest-fach, Swansea. He would preach in Hen Gapel on Sunday morning and evening, and in Bethesda in the afternoon. He arranged the last burial in Bethesda, David Lovelucke. As his health declined, he came to the two chapels less often and numbers declined. Upon his death in 1943, Bethesda finally closed. The house and adjacent land were sold. The chapel was demolished in the 1950s and the stone used elsewhere. Hen Gapel, the mother chapel continued with Hopkin Evans as the minister until services ended in 1960.



A modern map showing the plot where Bethesda used to be, now labelled as a disused burial ground

No photographs of Bethesda Chapel have been found. A visit in 2021 revealed the surrounding wall and the entrance are still there. However, the structure inside had been reduced almost to the ground and the graveyard was overgrown, with just a few standing memorial stones.



Bethesda House in 2021. The entrance to the former chapel and graveyard is just beyond, past the large tree and the telegraph pole.

*We are grateful to D G Arwyn Clement of Dyfed Family History Society for recording most of the memorial details when the graveyard was still in a reasonable condition. His schedules are recorded at the end of this paper.

3) PUT TO SECULAR USE

The history of Capel Cywyn

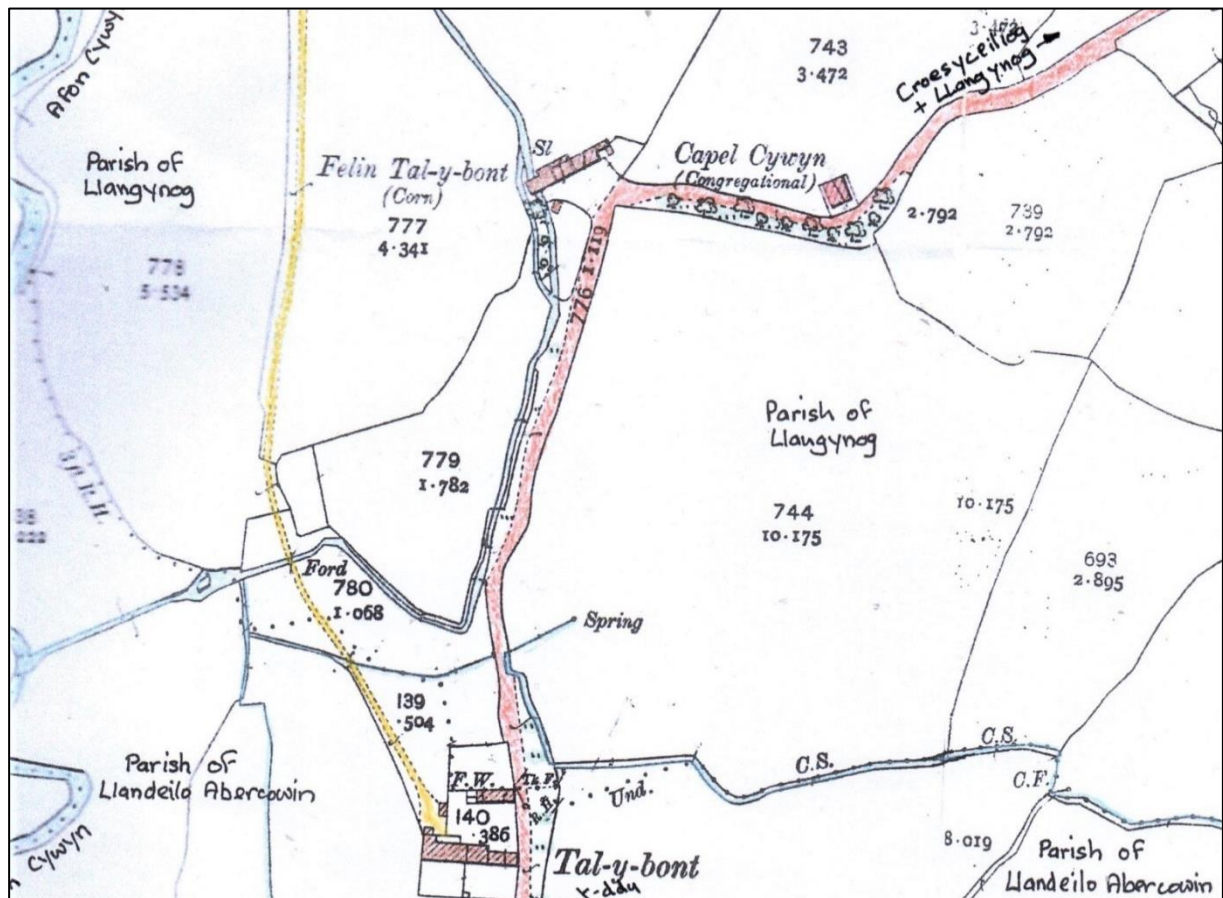
a) Incumbents (shared with other chapels)

- 1) Thomas Williams – 1864 to 1871 (7 years)
- 2) Thomas Lewis – 1872 to 1881 (9 years)
- 3) David Thomas – 1882 to 1905 (23 years)
- 4) James John – 1908 to 1931 (23 years)
- 5) Hopkin Evans – 1933 to 1957 (24 years)

b) Daughter chapel – 1865 to 1902

Capel Newydd in Llanybri was built in 1815. By 1851, the Religious Census said that there were over 250 attending in the morning and another 90 in the evening. In this era of religious expansion, minister William James would ride out from Capel Newydd to meet those who could not get to services. This included holding Sunday Schools in farmhouses around Llangynog, and in an area known as the *Gransh* (Grange), near Talybont Corn Mill.

In 1864, minister Thomas Williams came to Capel Newydd, and it was during his tenure that Capel Cywyn was built. The building was erected in the Gransh (Grange) area in 1869, according to the plaque over the door, although Hopkin Evans gives the date as 1865.



A 1900 map of the area showing Capel Cywyn, Tal-y-bont corn mill and Tal-y-bont Farm



The fine elevation of Capel Cywyn, photographed in 2021, still dominant and little changed from when it was built.

The chapel was accessed from the road via a small flight of steps to a central door in the gable end. There were two long bricked-lined arched windows either side of the entrance. Similar windows appeared on the side walls. Inside were pine pews with a pulpit at the far end. Although the chapel was built in a 3-acre field, no graveyard was included, and the boundary fence was set just beyond the building.

Capel Cywyn never became a full chapel. It was a daughter chapel to Capel Newydd, and part of a group under the same minister that included Smyrna and Bethel. Capel Cywyn was used primarily for Sunday Schools and Sunday evening sermons by families from the south-west of Llangynog parish. There was no organ to assist the singing. Thomas Williams left two years later.

In 1872, Thomas Lewis arrived as the second minister. He went to live in Llansteffan, as did all the subsequent ministers. He suffered tragedy when his wife, daughter, mother-in-law and maid all died of typhoid in quick succession. Nevertheless, he kept busy, arranging for the rebuilding of Capel Newydd in 1873/74. He stayed until 1881 when he left for Pembrokeshire.

In 1882, David Thomas from Llansawel came as the third minister. An 1896 report of a *Cymanfa Ganu* gives an idea of how the chapels worked together. The event was held at Capel Newydd with members of Hen Gapel, Llanybri, Capel Cywyn, and Bethel coming along to sing under the baton of Gad Protheroe. The assembled congregation was then addressed by Samuel Jones, Hen Gapel, E Richards, Capel Cywyn, Evan Francis, Capel Newydd and James Hughes, Bethel. David Thomas took Capel Cywyn into the 20th century.

c) Frock coat and silk hat – 1902 to 1957

In 1902, a report in the Carmarthen Journal confirmed the musical talent in the area. It said:-

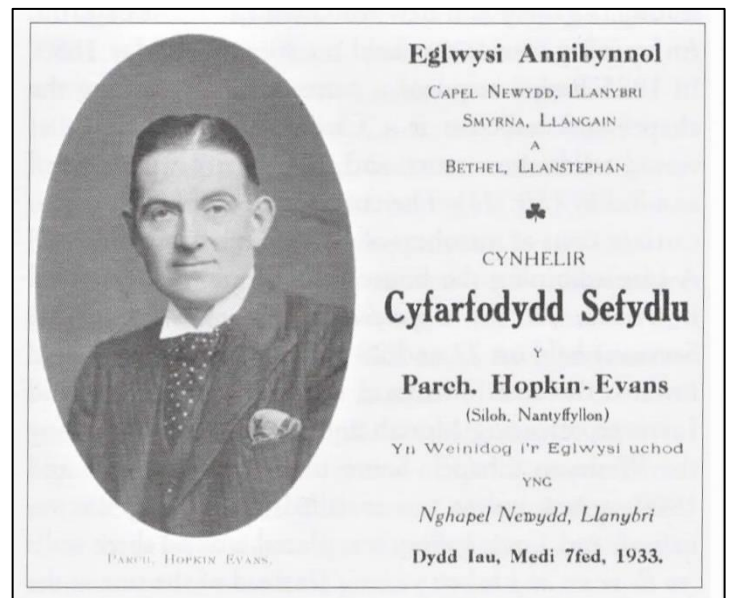
“LLANGUNNOCK. Competitive Meeting.- A very successful competitive meeting was held at Capel Cowin on Thursday the 12th of June under the presidency of Mr G Protheroe, Ivy Cottage. The conductor was the Rev. D Thomas, Llanybri. Adjudicators – Music, Mr D Jeremy Rees, Carmarthen; literature, Mr T Williams, Glanafonig, Llangain, all of whom performed their duties most satisfactory. The secretarial duties were carried out by Mr J Lewis, Tre-rhos, and those of treasurer by Mr D Lewis, Talybont Mill. The list of awards:-

“Solo, boys under 15 – Master J Protheroe.
Recitation for children – Miss E Elias, Llanybri.
Solo, girls u.15 – Miss M Protheroe, Tycanol.
Duet for children – J & M Protheroe, Tycanol.
Soprano solo – Miss M A Thomas, Llanybri.
Recitation, adults – Miss W Johns, Parkethyn.
Love letter – E Williams, Cwrtmawr.
Duet, tenor & bass – Protheroe & Lewis.

Tenor solo – Mr J Thomas, Pantyrhaiad.
Quartet – Messrs Protheroe & Misses Johns.
Stanza, ‘Y Bont Ddu’ – Miss E Johns.
Bass solo – Caledfryn, Johnstown.
Reading at first sight – Miss Johns.
Duet, bass & soprano – Mr W & Miss E Johns.
Impromptu speech – Messrs Willie Rees
Chief choral – Capel Cowin Party.”

In 1905, David Thomas retired through ill health. He died in 1908 while preparing for the installation of his successor and the 4th incumbent, James John.

James John came from St David’s in Pembrokeshire but had done much travelling before arriving at the four chapels. He had worked in Maerdy coal mine and had then been a minister in the USA and in various South Wales communities. A popular man, he cut a dash in a long frock coat and silk hat and enjoyed shooting and fishing. Unlike many nonconformist ministers, he spoke at many recruiting meetings during World War I. In 1931, twenty-three years after his arrival, he accepted a call to return to his native St David’s.



Left, James John (with umbrella) with his son. Right, his successor, Hopkin Evans comes to preach

In 1933, the 5th and last minister to have Capel Cywyn within his portfolio was Hopkin Evans.

He stayed in the area for 39 years and achieved a great deal during his ministry, with Capel Newydd having over 100 members in 1957. However, Capel Cywyn had been going downhill. Winter services had finished in 1951 and it eventually closed in 1957. Hopkin Evans retired in 1972 and died the following year.

In the 1960s, the old chapel was used as a hay shed for a while. Unlike Bethesda however, it didn't disappear but lived on as a private dwelling house.



Capel Cywyn in 2021. The side elevation of the original chapel has been left unrendered to show its origins, and the modern extension reflects its partner with brick arched windows. The nameplate also reminds passers-by of its history.

4) UNSUNG HEROES – A few summary remarks

As so much of this paper has been based on research carried out by Eiluned Rees, here are a few relevant closing paragraphs from her 2008 essay:-

“The future of chapels is uncertain throughout the country. Dwindling congregations and rising costs mean that chapel buildings and graveyards are being increasingly difficult to maintain. Christianity is no longer automatically taught in schools and the time may come when few people will know what went on inside a chapel, let alone realise how important a role it played in the community.

“The chapel as an institution was never perfect, but the world shows no sign of having improved since its decline. **Tribute is due** to those unsung heroes, the Independent ministers and their congregations, who served the cause in this area for over 300 years; and tribute too to the devotees who are struggling to keep it alive against overwhelming odds”.

Appendix 1

BURIALS AT BETHESDA INDEPENDENT CHAPEL

Listed by Mr D G Arwyn Clement of Dyfed Family History Society in 1983/84
(order by year of death)

Name		Abode	Village/parish	Year of death	Age	Notes
Jennet	Barret		Llangain	1778	69	
Mary	Francis			1779	4	Dau. of David
N	Lewis		Llanybri	1779	2	
John	Thomas			1780	1	Child of Jonnah
Rev. Tomas	Davies			1782	72	Minister of this church
Mary	Thomas			1783	12	Child of Jonnah
Jonna	Thomas			1783	1	Child of Jonnah
Margaret	Thomas		Llangynog	1784	26	
Elizabeth	Thomas			1788	2	Child of Jonnah
David	Thomas	Y Rhos		1788	79	
David	Francis		Llangynog	1789	52	Father of Mary
Simon	Thomas		Bristol	1789	2	Child of Jonnah
Jonnah	Davies			1790	41	Son of Rev. Tomas
Jane	Thomas			1790		Child of Jonnah
D	Lewis			1792		
No name				1793	14days	
Lewis	Williams			1795	3	
William	Williams			1795	2	Son of John
John	Williams	Graig		1799	46	
John	Barret	-		1802	92	
Mary	Davies			1802	3 wks	Dau. of Rev. David
David	Jones			1802	73	
Elizabeth	Davies			1805	9 mths	Sister of Mary
John	Thomas			1806	26	
Elizabeth	Thomas			1806	2	Daughter of Daniel
Margaret	Thomas			1806	4	Daughter of Daniel
Lewis	Nicholl		Llangynog	1807		Husband of Margaret
David	Davies	Porth y clyriau	Llangain	1808	27	
John	Murphy		Llanstephan	1808	45	
Margaret	Nicholl			1809	78	Wife of Lewis
Jonnah	Thomas			1818	76	Father, husband of Marg.
Anna	John	Arddervin		1819	47	Wife of William
William	Williams	Laques Fawr	Llanstephan	1820	69	Husband of Elinor
Gennet	Jones			1826	82	Wife of Jonnah
James	Jones		Llanybri	1830	47	Husband of Margaret
Sarah	Edwards			1832	3 mths	Dau. of John & Sarah
Elinor	Williams			1832	73	Wife of William
Rachel	Davies			1837	3	Dau. of Ben & Eliz.
Anna	Jones		Llanybri	1840	23	Dau. of James & Margaret
William	Jones		Llanybri	1840	30	Son of James & Margaret
Sarah	Edwards		Llanybri	1841	44	Wife of John

John	Lewis	Penrheol	Llangain	1847	52	
Margaret	Davies		Llanybri	1850	37	Wife of David
Joseph	Isaac		Llanybri	1852	62	Husband of Esther
John	Griffiths	Parcknwc	Llanstephan	1853	4	Son of Evan & Anne
William	Lewis	Penrheol	Llangain	1853	30	
William	Williams			1854	24	Son of Evan
Margaret	Jones			1857	74	Wife of James
William	Davies	Penrheol Llaethdy	Llangynog	1859	55	Husband of Ann
Mary	Jones	Blaencwm	Llanstephan	1860	13 mths	Dau. of Daniel & Mary
William	Evans	Penygraig	Llangynog	1861	24	Son of John & Ann
Esther	Isaac			1862	76	Wife of Joseph
John	Evans			1863	68	Husband of Ann
Benjamin	Davies	Llaethdy Bach		1864	62	Husband of Elizabeth
David	Griffiths	Parcknwc	Llanstephan	1864	21	Son of Evan & Anne
William	Griffiths	Parcknwc	Llanstephan	1866		Son of Evan & Anne
David	Davies	Buried in	Aberdare	1868	36	Son of Ben & Eliz.
Ann	Davies	Penrheol Llaethdy	Llangynog	1868	63	Wife of William
Edward	Lovelucke	Ffald	Llangynog	1871	23	Son of John & Mary
John	David	Porthyclinie	Llangain	1872	12	
Joseph	Jones		Llanybri	1872	9 mths	Son of John
John	Lovelucke	Ffald	Llangynog	1872	30	Son of John & Mary
Dina	Thomas	Parkyrhos		1873	69	Wife of Edmund
Mary	Jones	Parkglas	Llanstephan	1876	15	Dau. of David & Mary
Edmund	Thomas	Parkyrhos		1876	78	Husband of Dina
Cap. James	Jones		Llanybri	1877	70	
John	Harry	College Bach	Llangynog	1878	61	
Daniel(David)	Jones			1878	67	Husband of Mary
Elizabeth	Davies			1881	77	Wife of Benjamin
Evan	Williams		Llanybri	1882	67	Mason
Rachael	Davies	Penybigwrn	Llangynog	1884	21	Dau. of Ben & Anna
Henry	Jones	Penyglog	Llangynog	1884	64	Husband of Mary
Mary	Jones			1885	72	Wife of Daniel (David)
Thomas	John	Parkglas	Llanstephan	1886	42	
Sarah	Phillips		Llanybri	1886	34	Dau. of David & Margaret
John	Jones		Llanybri	1889	46	
Margaret	Williams		Llanybri	1889	2	Dau. of William & Jane
Evan	Griffiths	Parknock	Llanstephan	1890	84	Husband of Anne
Anne	Griffiths	Parcknock	Llanstephan	1891	88	Wife of Evan
Rachael	Williams		Llanybri	1891	80	Wife of Evan (mason)
John	Morris	Well House	Llanstephan	1894	20	Son of Ann
Anna	Davies	Penybigwrn	Llangynog	1898	69	Wife of Benjamin
Margaret	Phillips		Llanybri	1900	78	Wife of David
David	Phillips			1901	80	Husband of Margaret
Ann	Williams			1901	35	Dau. of Evan & Rachel
Mary	Jones			1903	85	Wife of Henry
Edward	Jones	Langorse	Llangynog	1904	50	Father of Sarah Ann
Phoebe	Phillips			1904	4 days	Dau. of Edward & Emelia
Elizabeth	Hughes	Mount Pleasant	Llangynog	1909	61	Wife of William
Elizabeth	Jones		Llanybri	1911	42	Dau. Of John & Charlotte
Tom	Walters			1918	30	Son of John

Thomas	Jones			1921	59	Son of Henry & Mary
David	Phillips	Tygwyn	Llanybri	1922	77	
William	Hughes	Mount Pleasant	Llangynog	1923	76	Husband of Elizabeth
John	Walters	Tycanol		1923	61	Father of Tom
Sarah Ann	Jones			1925	28	Dau. of Edward
Sarah	Jones			1932	64	Widow of Edward
Gwylm	Jones	Late of Langorse	Llangynog	1934	34	
David	Lovelucke	Ffald	Llangynog	1935	83	Son of John & Mary
Margaret	Davies				77	Wife of Jonnah
Ben	Davies					
Mary	Edwards	Pwll y merch				
David	Edwards	Pwll y merch				
Thomas	Richard	Lan	Llangynog			
Ann	Williams		Llanybri			
John	Williams		Llanybri			
Anna	Williams		Llanybri			
Jane	Williams		Cold Blow			Daughter of William

Appendix II

MEMORIAL TRANSCRIPTIONS AT BETHESDA CHAPEL

Transcribed in alphabetical order by surname and courtesy of Dyfed Family History Society

B 21	In memory of JENNET BARRET of the parish of Llangain who died the 6 day of May 1778 aged 69 years <i>Cadwodd ei daearol dy</i> <i>Ac aethant trwy'r Jorddonen ddu</i> <i>Ar Iesu fry i Seion fryn</i> <i>Lle roedd eu chalon hwy cyn hyn</i> Here lieth the body of JOHN BARRET who died 2 nd day of Jan'y 1802 aged 92 years
D 47	In memory of JOHN DAVID Porthyclinie in Llangain parish who died February 5th 1872 aged 12 years <i>Am hynny byddwch chwithau barod canys yn yr awr ni thybioch y daw Mab y dyn</i>
52	Er cof am BENJAMIN DAVIES Llaethdy Bach yr hwn a fu farw Gorfennaf 23 1864 yn 62 oed Hefyd ELIZABETH DAVIES ei wraig a fu farw Ebrill 13 1881 yn 77 oed <i>Na fwrw fi ymaeth yn amser henaint</i> <i>Na wrthod fi, pan ballo fy nerth</i> Hefyd RACHEL DAVIES merch yr uchod a fu farw Mai 22 1837 yn 3 blwydd oed DAVID DAVIES eu mab fu farw Awst 17 1868 yn 36 ml. oed Ac a gladdwyd yn Cemetery Aberdar
53	BEN DAVIES
51	DAVID DAVIES Porth y clyriau in the parish of Llangain died June 23 1808 aged 27 years
36	In memory of MARY DAVIES daughter of the Rev. DAVID DAVIES who died the 8 th day of April 1802 aged 3 weeks Also of ELIZABETH DAVIES sister of the above MARY DAVIES who died the 26 th day of May 1805 aged 9 months
10	Er coffadwraiaeth am RACHEL merch BENJAMIN a ANNA DAVIES Penybigrwn o'r plwyf hwn yr hon a fu farw Rhagfyr 11 1884 yn 21 oed <i>Dyddiau dyn sydd fel glaswelltyn, megus blodeuyn y maes, felly y blodeua efe</i> Hefyd yr uchod ANNA DAVIES a fu farw Tach 1 1898 yn 69 ml. oed <i>A Hannah a weddodd, ac a ddywedodd Llawenychodd fy nghalon yn yr Arglwydd</i>
19	Here lie the remains of the Rev. TOMAS DAVIES late Minister of this Church who departed this life September 17 1782 aged 72 years Also of JONNAH DAVIES his son who departed this life August 14th 1790 aged 41 years Also of MARGARET wife of the said JONNAH DAVIES who departed this life November 13 th aged 77 years
57	Er cof am WILLIAM DAVIES Penrheol Llaethdy o'r plwyf hwn bu farw Medi 16 1859 yn 55 oed <i>Ond i Dduw y byddo'r diolch yr hwn sydd yn rhoddi i ni fuddugoliaeth drwy ein Harglwydd Iesu Grist</i> Hefyd ANN ei briod bu farw Marwth 8 1868 yn 63 oed
58	Sacred to the memory of MARGARET wife of DAVID DAVIES Llanybri who died 13 th July 1850 aged 37 years <i>Gwyn ei byd y bobl a adwaenant yr hyfryd lais yn llewyrch dy wyneb</i> <i>O Arglwydd y rhodiant hwy</i>
E 17	MARY EDWARDS Pwll y merch
18	DAVID EDWARDS Pwll y merch

35 Sacred to the memory of SARAH wife of JOHN EDWARDS Llanybri who died May 17th 1841 aged 44 years

A gwaredigion yr Arglwydd a ddychwelant

Ac a ddeuant i Seion a chaniadau,

Ac a llawenydd tragwyddol ar eu pen:

Goddiweddant lawenydd a hyfrydwch

A chystudd a galar a ffy ymaith

SARAH daughter of the above named who died April 4th 1832 aged 3 months

9 Sacred to the memory of WILLIAM the son of JOHN and ANN EVANS Penygraig in this parish who died Feb^y 17 1861 aged 24 years

In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up. In the evening it is cut down and withereth

Also of the above JOHN EVANS who died Nov^r 9 1863 aged 68 years

A'r hyn yr wyf yn ei ddywedid wrthyd chwi, yr wyf yn ei ddywedid wrth bawb Gwylwch

F 22 Here lieth the body of DAVID FRANCIS of this parish who died July 19th 1789 aged 52 years

In memory of MARY FRANCIS his daughter of the aforesaid DAVID FRANCIS 1779 aged 4 years

Q 5 Here lieth the remains of DAVID son of EVAN and ANNE GRIFFITHS of Parcknwc in the parish of Llanstephan who died March 4 1864 aged 21 years

7 Er cof am EVAN GRIFFITHS Parknock plwyf Llanstephan yr hwn a fu farw Chwefror 15 1890 yn 84 oed

Hefyd am ANNE ei wraig a fu farw Rhagfyr 11^{eg} 1891 yn 88 oed

H 63 Yma gorwedd corph JOHN HARRY College Bach, Llangynnog died the 26th June 1878 aged 61 years

Dyn a aned o wraig sydd fyr o ddyddiau

38 Er cof am ELIZABETH HUGHES gwraig WILLIAM HUGHES, Mount Pleasant bu farw Rhagfyr 16 1909 yn 61 mlwydd oed

Canys byw i mi Crist, a marw sydd elw

Hefyd WILLIAM HUGHES annwyl briod yr uchod bu farw Ionawr 19 1923 yn 76 oed

Chwalu cartref, rhanu teulu

Dyna sydd yn bod o hyd

Nid oes yma deulu cyfan

Byth i'w gael o fewn y byd

I 44 Sacred to the memory of JOSEPH ISAAC Llanybri died December 12 1852 aged 62 years

Also ESTHER wife of the above died September 27 1862 aged 76 years

Yr Arglwydd yw fy rhan i, medd fy enaid; am hynny y gobeithiaf ynddo

J 15 Here lieth the body of ANNA the wife of WILLIAM JOHN Arddervin who died August the 24th 1819 age 47 years

12 In memory of THOMAS JOHN Parkglas, Llanstephan who died June 29 1886 aged 42 years

Gwylwch gan hynny am na wyddwch pa awr y daw eich Arglwydd

59	Sacred to the memory of ANNA daughter of JAMES and MARGARET JONES of Llanybri who died July 7 th 1840 aged 23 years
60	Sacred to the memory of WILLIAM son of JAMES and MARGARET JONES Llanybri who died July 14 th 1840 aged 30 years <i>Long nights and days I bore in pain To wait for cure twas all in vain But God at last he thought it best To ease my pain and give me rest</i>
26	DAVID JONES died April 21 1802 aged 73 years
49	Er cof am EDWARD JONES Lanygors o'r plwyf hwn bu farw Hydref 18 1904 yn 50 oed <i>Dyn a aned o wraig sydd fyr o ddyddiau a llawn o helbul Hefyd am dri o blant yr uchod y rhai a fiant feirw yn ei babandod Hefyd SARAH ANN JONES merch yr uchod bu farw Ebrill 18 1925 yn 28 ml oed Gwyn ei byd y rhai pur o galon canys hwy a welant Dduw Hefyd am SARAH JONES gweddw yr uchod bu farw Chwefror 12 1932 yn 64 oed Hyn a allodd hon, Hi a'i gwnaeth</i>
45	Er cof anwyl am ELIZABETH merch JOHN a CHARLOTTE JONES Llanybri bu farw Mehefin 29 1911 yn 42 ml. oed <i>Gwylwch gan hynny, am na wyddoch Pa awr y daw eich Arglwydd</i>
50	Er serchus gof am GWYLYM JONES gynt o Langors o'r plwyf hwn hunodd Medi 5 1934 yn 34 ml oed <i>Ynghanol ein bywyd, yr ydym mewn angau</i>
56	Er cof am HENRY JONES Penyglog o'r plwyf hwn a fu farw Chwefror 10 1884 yn 64 oed <i>Gwerthfawr yn golwg yr Arglwydd yw marwolaeth ei saint ef Hefyd MARY ei wraig a fu farw Ionawr 26^{ain} 1903 yn 85 oed Hefyd THOMAS JONES mab yr uchod bu farw Ionawr 1^{af} 1921 yn 59 ml oed</i>
61	Sacred to the memory of JAMES JONES Llanybri who died December 11 th 1830 aged 47 years <i>Farwell my wife, and children dear Though I must go and leave you here I hope the Lord will be your guide And evermore for you provide</i> Also of MARGARET wife of the above named J. JONES she died May 14 th 1857 aged 74 years
62	In memory of Cap. JAMES JONES of Llanybri died February 28 1877 aged 70 <i>The storm winds and neptious waves, Hath tossed me to and fro In spite of all my foes, ... arbour here below When I do now at anchour lie With others of my fleet I hope once more for to set sail Saviour Christ to meet Part of gravestone broken</i>

43	<i>Neswch at Dduw</i> Er cof am JOHN JONES Llanybri yr hon a fu farw Meh 13 1889 yn 46 ml oed Hefyd JOSEPH ei fab a fu farw Chwefror 1872 yn 9 mis oed <i>Gwylwch gan hynny, am na wyddoch na'r dydd na'r awr y daw mab y dyn</i>
11	Er cof am MARY merch DAVID a MARY JONES Parckglas, Llanstephan yr hon a fu farw Tach ^{edd} 29 1876 yn 15 mlwydd oed <i>Cofia yn awr dy Greawdwr yn nyddiau dy ieuengtid</i> Hefyd Y Parch DANIEL JONES yr uchod a fu farw Rhagfyr y 27 1878 yn 67 mlwydd oed <i>Mi a ymdrechais ymdrech deg, mi a orphenais fy ngyrfa, mi a gedwais y fydd</i> Hefyd MARY JONES yr uchod a fu farw Tachwedd 30 1885 yn 72 mlwydd oed <i>Am hynny byddwch chwythau barod, canys yn yr awr hi thybioch y daw mab y dyn</i>
16	Er cof am MARY merch DANIEL a MARY JONES Blaencwm o blwyf Llanstephan yr hon a fu farw Hyd 7 ^{ed} 1860 yn 13 mis oed <i>Wele, plant y dyn etifeddiaeth yr Arglwydd</i>
L31	Here lieth the body of JOHN LEWIS of Penrheol in the parish of Llangain who died 15 th January 1847 aged 52 years
32	Sacred to memory of WILLIAM LEWIS of Penrheol, Llangain who died 2 nd February 1853 aged 30 years
28	N. LEWIS aged 2 years 1779 D.LEWIS aged 10years 1792
48	Sacred to the memory of EDWARD LOVELUCKE son of JOHN and MARY LOVELUCKE of Fald, in this parish who died May 12th 1871 aged 23 years Also JOHN LOVELUCKE son of the above died September 10 1872 aged 30 years <i>A'th gynghor y'm harweini ac wedi hynny y'm cymmeri i ogoniant</i> Also of their son DAVID LOVELUCKE of Fald, died June 30 1935 aged 83 years
m13	Er cof am JOHN mab ANN MORRIS Well House, Llanstephan bu farw Hydref 9 ^{ed} 1894 yn 20 oed <i>Canys yr ieuengtid a ddiffycia, ac a flina a'r gwyr ieuaing can sythrio a sythiant</i>
42	In memory of JOHN MURPHY of Llanstephan parish who died April 7 th 1808 aged 45 years <i>Oh na bae in ddoethion na ddeallant hyn, nad yftyrient eu di I wedd</i>
N8	In memory of LEWIS NICHOLL of this parish who died Nov 11 1807 Here also lieth the body of MARGARET the wife of the above LEWIS NICHOLL who died 1809 aged 78 years Corner of stone broken
P1	Er serchus gof am DAVID PHILLIPS Ty Gwyn, Llanybri bu farw Rhag 31, 1922 yn 77 ml. oed <i>Fy amddiffyn sydd o Dduw</i> <i>Iachawdwr y rhai uniawn o galon</i>
2	Er cof am MARGARET gwraig DAVID PHILLIPS Llanybrie yr hon a fu farw Awst 14 1900 yn 78 oed Hefyd am DAVID PHILLIPS yr uchod yr hwn a fu farw Ebrill 9 1901 yn 80 oed Hefyd am PHOEBE plentyn EDWARD a EMELIA PHILLIPS bu farw Mai 24 1904 yn 4 diwrnod oed

37	In memory of SARAH daughter of Dd & MARGARET PHILLIPS Llanybri who died June 4 1886 aged 34 years <i>Fel y blodeuyn y daw allan, ac a torrir ef ymaith ac efe a gilia fel cysgod ac ni saif</i>
R27	THOMAS RICHARD, Lan of this parish died 17 Stone badly defaced
T23	Here lieth the body of DAVID THOMAS of Y Rhos who died 11 th day of January 1788 aged 79 yrs
39	Er cof am EDMUND THOMAS Parkyrhos yr hwn a fu farw Mai 3 1876 yn 78 oed Hefyd DINA THOMAS ei wraig o fu farw Chwefror 21 1873 yn 69 oed
46	Here lie the remains of ELIZABETH THOMAS who died the 27 th of February 1806 aged 2 years Also the body of MARGARET THOMAS two daughters of DANIEL THOMAS of Parkrhos who died 1st March 1806 aged 4 years <i>Ar ein beddan na ryfewch Rhai ifanc arafedd o dag Diau buan y dewch I'r llawr yn gydradd ar llawr</i>
20	Here lie the remains of the children of JONNAH THOMAS of this parish JOHN THOMAS died 11 th day of March 1780 aged 1 years MARY THOMAS died this 12 th day of May 1783 aged 12 years JONNA THOMAS died this ... day September 1783 aged 1 year ELIZABETH THOMAS died this 4 th day of October 1788 aged 2 years In memory of SIMON THOMAS Bristol, and buried in Burial Ground in Brunswick 11th day if February 1789 aged 2 years JANE THOMAS died this 4th day of May 1790 aged 24 years Also GENNET wife of JONNAH JONES died 4 th June 1826 aged 82 years In memory of JOHN THOMAS drowned in care of Barhadres June 30 1806 aged 26 years Here also lieth the remains of JONNAH the father of the above children died May 10 1818 aged 76 years Also G.....
25	Here lieth the body of MARGARET THOMAS of this parish who died December 14 day 1784 aged 26 years <i>Dos dithau hyd y diwedd Canys gorphwysi Ac sefi yn dy ran Yn niwedd y dyddiau</i>
W3	In loving memory of JOHN WALTERS Ty canol died May 2 1923 aged 61 years Also of TOM his son died June 10 1918 aged 30 yrs <i>Rest in Peace</i>
54	ANN WILLIAMS Llanybri
55	JOHN and ANNA WILLIAMS Llanybri
14	Here lieth the body of JANE WILLIAMS daughter of WILLIAM WILLIAMS of Cold Blow who died 19th day of
34	In memory of JOHN WILLIAMS of Graig who died the 5 th day of May 1799 aged 46 years

24	Here lieth the body of LEWIS WILLIAMS who departed this life 14 th of January 1795 aged 3 years Also WILLIAM WILLIAMS the son of JOHN WILLIAMS who departed this life 17 th January 1795 aged 2 years & 3 quarter
4	Here rests the body of MARGARET the daughter of Wm & JANE WILLIAMS of Llanybri who died Nov 15 1889 aged 2 years Also in memory of JOHN the son of EVAN & ANN GRIFFITHS of Parcknwc in the Parish of Llanstephan who died May 21 1853 aged 4 yrs Also WILLIAM son of the above EVAN and ANNE GRIFFITHS who died June 9 1866
40	In memory of RACHEL wife of EVAN WILLIAMS, Mason, of Llanybri who died August 15 1891 aged 80 years <i>Gwerthfawr yngolwg yr Arglwydd yw marwolaeth ei saint ef</i> Also ANN daughter of the above died March 16 1901 aged 35 years
41	In memory of EVANS WILLIAMS, Mason of Llanybri who died February 7 1882 aged 67 years Also WILLIAM his son died April 11 1854 aged 24 years <i>Mi a ymdrechais ymdrech deg</i> <i>Mi a orphenais fy ngyrfa</i> <i>Mi a gadwais y ffydd</i>
6	Here lieth the body of WILLIAM WILLIAMS of Laques - Fawr in the parish of Llanstephan who died Nov 13 1820 aged 69 years Also ELINOR wife of the above died Jan ^y 1 1832 aged 73 years This stone was erected by their son William Williams, Llanybri
29	Table Tomb Unreadable
30	Top of Gravestone broken The 15 th day of October 1793 aged 14 days
33	Table stone Unreadable